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SUBJECT: EMBASSY BAGHDAD DELEGATION BRIEFS GOJ ON PROPOSED  
SITE FOR JORDANIAN EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD

REF: AMMAN 00927

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) SUMMARY: An Embassy Baghdad delegation briefed senior Government of Jordan (GOJ) officials on the proposed site of the new Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad following King Abdullah's announcement that the GOJ would send an ambassador to Iraq. In separate meetings on June 5, Embassy Baghdad Management Counselor Alford, Political Counselor Tueller, Deputy RSO Hanni and MNF-I LCDR Rochford presented the plans to Foreign Minister Salah Bashir, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Khaldoun Talhouni, Minister of Interior Eid Al-Fayez, and General Intelligence Directorate (GID) Deputy Director for Operations Brigadier General Arafat. The delegation reported that the Government of Iraq (GOI) is offering to lease the GOJ a property in move-in condition adjacent to the New Embassy Compound (NEC). Each GOJ interlocutor expressed concern over security and the financial resources necessary to open and maintain such a diplomatic mission. The Delegation responded that the villa's proximity to the NEC afforded the best possible security as it is near the NEC's security perimeter and within the NEC's exterior checkpoints. The delegation also explained security procedures at the respective checkpoints to the International Zone (IZ) and NEC, as well as the current security profile of the IZ. The GOJ officials agreed the next step would be to send a joint team, including representatives from the Jordanian Armed Forces, to examine the site. They pointed to the timing of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki's upcoming visit as motivation to do so quickly. END SUMMARY

Safety Concerns  
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12. (S) Minister of Interior Fayez asserted that he trusted the United States would keep the Jordanian embassy secure, but voiced that the GOJ still remembers the 2003 attack on its embassy and did not want to repeat that experience. BG Arafat, MFA SecGen Talhouni, and Foreign Minister Bashir all also referred to the attack and expressed their concerns for the safety of their ambassador and lower-level diplomats who would be assigned to Iraq. While Fayez focused more on the safety of the site, his GOJ colleagues asked detailed questions about security practices for transportation to and from Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), visits to the

so-called Red Zone, and travel within the IZ itself. The team presented slides and maps to elaborate on the proximity of the proposed chancery to the NEC and explained the NEC and broader IZ security procedures. DRSO outlined Embassy Baghdad's security package for the U.S. Ambassador for both moves within and outside the IZ, as well as security packages for general Embassy staff when traveling outside the IZ. He also made clear that Embassy staff drive soft-skin vehicles within the IZ and often self-drive. The team impressed upon the GOJ officials that the security environment is much improved from 12 months ago and that there have been no bombings in the IZ in ten months. DRSO stressed that attacks on the road from the IZ to BIAP from January to May have fallen 88 percent from the same period in 2007.

13. (S) DRSO further recommended that the GOJ conduct its own security survey in order to determine its exact needs. BG Arafat emphasized that the joint survey team must include members of the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) as they would have overall responsibility for securing the embassy and that they must be "in the loop." The GOJ officials' concerns were mitigated somewhat by the villa's proximity to the NEC and location within NEC checkpoints, as well as an offer to provide security to and from BIAP and for limited moves into the Red Zone during the initial period after the mission is established. They were also informed of the improved security profile for the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the respective compounds of key leaders. Discussion of how to secure the Jordanian Ambassador, the embassy, and its staff led to their second shared concern: cost.

Resource Concerns  
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14. (S) The GOJ officials reacted to explanations of Embassy Baghdad's security procedures with concern over how they would pay for comparable security for their own personnel. Talhouni asked if the USG would provide them with protective security details, embassy guards, or armored vehicles. The delegation repeated its offer to provide security to and from the airport as well as limited moves outside the IZ, but told their interlocutors that they would need to provide or contract their own security guard force and purchase their own armored vehicles. The MFA's resource concerns went beyond security costs; the SecGen expressed dismay that the GOJ would have to purchase or lease the villa rather than it being provided gratis by the GOI. Talhouni also asked who would pay for the furniture. Bashir, Talhouni, and Fayez each mentioned the upcoming visit to Jordan of Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki and stated that they would need to see something from him acknowledging the financial toll that the number of displaced Iraqis living in Jordan since 2003 has taken on Jordan. Fayez directly tied the cost of the Iraqis living in Jordan, which he put at 550,000 (Reftel) to his belief that Iraq should provide discounted oil from a field other than Baiji that would reach Jordan with fewer complications. Bashir asserted that the relationship with Iraq was one-sided, stating that, "diplomacy is supposed to be a two-way street, and ours is a way of sorrow." Polcouns Baghdad repeated to each official that the King made clear his desire and intent to send an ambassador to Iraq and that the USG appreciated this commitment. Each official acknowledged this and reaffirmed their commitment as well.

Next Steps  
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15. (S) The GOJ agreed to send a joint survey team to examine Villa 3 East as soon as possible. The joint team would include representatives from the MFA, GID, MOI and JAF. Embassy Baghdad representatives stressed the urgency and repeated that this villa was selected because it would be ready the soonest, and that it was large enough to accommodate office and living space for 20-40 people. The officials were told they were the first Arab country to be offered one of these villas, and that the USG hoped Jordan would be first Arab country to send an ambassador. Choosing

this villa would enable them to achieve that distinction. They were told that the other five villas being refurbished would be offered to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Kuwait, and that Denmark had already selected Villa 4 to house its aid mission. The June 5 visit of the UAE Foreign Minister to Iraq was also discussed and seemed to motivate timely action. Post will review the composition and scheduling of the joint survey team's visit to Baghdad in the coming days.

Comment

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16. (S) The Foreign Ministry, Ministry of the Interior, and General Intelligence Directorate expressed reservations over security and cost but also displayed a sense of urgency to satisfy the wishes of the King. GID Deputy Director BG Arafat in particular appreciated the importance of opening the Jordanian Embassy as soon as possible and seemed willing to push for the joint survey team to conduct its business as soon as possible. Security issues and the financial resources of the MFA will remain concerns and require further coordination between Post and the GOJ.

17. (U) This message was coordinated with Embassy Baghdad.

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